

EDUCATION IN LOCAL JUVENILE DETENTION CENTERS

STUDY PLAN

Study Mandate

- As a result of Virginia's recent juvenile justice reform efforts, the average daily population in local detention centers has decreased dramatically; however, the funding level for education provided in these centers has remained relatively the same. The Virginia Commission on Youth shall:
 - Assess local juvenile detention centers' education systems and how education is delivered.
 - Conduct an overview of other state-operated programs for children in residence or in the custody of state agencies (Section 22.1-7).
 - Review education-related state and federal laws and regulations related to detained youth.
 - Make recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of educational services in local detention centers.

Identified Issues

- Juvenile detention provides a temporary placement for juveniles with criminal charges who require a secure environment to ensure public safety for the community or to provide protection of the juvenile's own well-being.
- There are 24 juvenile detention centers (JDCs) in the Commonwealth, each operated by local governments or multi-jurisdictional commissions.
- Educational instruction (including remedial services), which is provided by the locality in which the JDC is located, is required within 24 hours of detainment (or the next school day).
- The locality provides the educational program for all juveniles in its detention centers. The ages and grade levels of these juveniles span a wide range. Instruction is in all core classes and special education, and students are taught exclusively under the Standards of Learning (SOL). Some detention centers also teach life and vocational skills and provide GED preparation.
- The Department of Juvenile Justice partners with 10 local detention centers to provide Community Placement Programs (CPPs). CPPs are highly structured and disciplined residential programs for committed juveniles. They focus on treatment needs and risk factors and on developing competency in the areas of education, job readiness, and life and social skills.
- Pre-dispositional (Pre-D) juveniles constitute a majority of the population within a detention center (72.6%). The remaining 27.4% of detained juveniles have a post-dispositional (Post-D) status or "other" detention dispositional status.
- In 2019, the average length of stay for Pre-D individuals was 24.1 days, and 29.8% of Pre-D youth had a length of stay of 3 days or less. Conversely, the average length of stay for juveniles with Post-D status is generally much longer (144.6 days). The difference in the length of stay between Pre-D and Post-D juveniles likely presents a challenge to adequately addressing the education needs of all juveniles in a detention center.

- The number of juvenile intake cases has declined significantly since 2010, with a decrease of 43.6%. Overall, the JDC average daily population declined by 35.3% between 2010 (805 detainees) and 2019 (520 detainees). The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) forecasts that the JDC population will continue to decrease through 2020 and then level off at around 457 detainees for the remainder of their forecast through 2025.

Study Activities

- Provide an overview of Virginia's Juvenile Justice System.
- Convene an Advisory Group with representatives from the following agencies and groups:
 - Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice
 - Virginia Department of Education
 - Virginia Juvenile Detention Association
 - Juvenile Detention Center educators
 - Education stakeholders
 - Commission on Youth members
- Conduct site visits and interviews at juvenile detention centers.
- Research state and federal laws and regulations.
- Develop recommendations as needed.
- Present findings and recommendations to the Commission on Youth.
- Receive public comment.
- Prepare final report.